

3-5-2003

I am a corporate pilot that has been based at Lakefront Airport since 1975. I hold an Air Transport Pilot rating, Multi-engine Land, in addition to Commercial Single-engine Land and Helicopter Ratings. I am type rated on Learjet, Citation, and Westwind corporate jets. My instructor ratings include Single & multi-engine land, Instrument and helicopter. The majority of these ratings were obtained here at Lakefront Airport and I believe I have thorough knowledge of this airport. I am currently flying a corporate jet, based at Million Air, for a local corporation.

Over the years, I have seen how productive this airport can be. Just look at the conventions that come to New Orleans and the number of aircraft that fly into Lakefront for these conventions. The National Business Aircraft Association has had their annual convention here numerous times with the static displays located at Lakefront Airport. This airport makes an extremely large impact on the New Orleans area and its economy.

However, I am thoroughly disgusted with the New Orleans Levee Board (the governing body for the airport) and how they operate this airport. From the outrageous fuel flowage fees being charged to the poor condition of the recently repaved main runway (18R/36L), it is evident that this airport needs new management in order to progress.

I have been following the privatization procedure of the airport and have attended three to four levee board meetings that I was informed about. I found out about these meetings solely by word-of-mouth. Other public meetings were not announced or posted to my knowledge. This seems to be normal operating procedures for the Levee Board. What informal meetings were Mr. Murdock III referring to in his letter dated 2-28-2003? Can he provide a list?

Recently, I found out that the Levee Board has selected American Airports Corp. LLC to lease, manage, operate, commercial enhancement and development of Lakefront Airport. I am totally against AAC getting this 50-year lease or any other lease/ management contract for the following reasons.

1. The two qualifying (?) companies were T.B.I. and A.A.C.
2. I believe that AAC was not qualified to bid due to their lack of experience in management of airports the size of Lakefront Airport. The airports that AAC claims to manage were bought shortly before or after the bids for privatization went out giving an inflated impression of their experience.
3. On October 23, 2001, I personally flew into Gen. W. J. Fox Airport, Lancaster, Calif., one of the airports managed by AAC. I was not impressed at all with what I found. This is a single runway airport with no control tower and very limited facilities. There was only one person there when we landed. After a few questions, I learned that he was in charge of the airport for the night, fueling the aircraft & billing, as well as in charge of fire fighting/

rescue. When asked what training he had, he replied that he had very limited fueling and no fire/rescue training. Has the airport improved since?

4. While visiting Los Angeles on another trip, I drove to Santa Monica Airport to check on initial claims that AAC operated/managed that airport. In reality, AAC is only a tenant there and the airport is operated/managed by the City of Santa Monica. Claims by AAC as to the business that they brought to the airport could not be substantiated and is very questionable. Can a list of the business brought to Santa Monica Airport be provided?
5. In Seattle, Washington on another trip, I read an article about how the City of Tacoma was taking their airport back from AAC due to non-performance and disrepair of the airport. Is this true?
6. In the proposed lease with AAC, they speak about their “affiliates”. I believe this to be a loophole allowing gross mismanagement of the airport. This loophole could allow, “affiliates” to increase fuel prices, service fees or any other fees without any public comment or approval, all due to the CPI. Will AAC have any ownership of their “affiliates”? If so, is there a conflict of interest? Again, the operators and users of Lakefront would have to bear the burden of cost eventually driving business from the field and possibly closing this airport. Could this be what AAC wants in order to gain valuable real estate for a condominium development?
7. What money is AAC personally bringing into this privatization? Is there a performance bond? If so, is it adequate to protect the operations and operators at Lakefront Airport? Is AAC forecasting revenues based on passenger facility charges only and is this realistic? How much commercial traffic will AAC bring in? What about a non-performance clause with fines and fees to protect Lakefront Airport? How can the same attorney represent both AAC and the Orleans Levee Board in negotiations with the FAA? Isn't this a conflict of interest?
8. Another questionable event occurred with the appointment and subsequent removal from the Levee Board of former City Council Member Peggy Wilson by Governor Foster. Why was this done? Was Mrs. Wilson asking the questions that no one wanted to answer? Why wasn't she given the information about AAC that was requested? Louisiana politics at it's best?
9. Is the Orleans Levee District asking the FAA to waive the “Grant Assurances” required by the FAA? What would be the amount in question? \$30,000,000? As a taxpayer, I would like to know why the “Grant Assurances” should be waived! How will this benefit Lakefront Airport?

These are some of the reasons that I hereby formerly request an extension to the comment period for 90 days and a public hearing to be conducted by the FAA to further investigate this privatization procedure. I also request a formal audit by the FAA and/or grand jury investigation of the operations at Lakefront Airport due to the statements made by the Levee Board of losses incurred by the airport and recommending privatization. I believe that some of the funds allocated for Lakefront Airport have been used for non-airport projects.

As a concerned taxpayer and user of Lakefront Airport, I wish for a management company with the honesty, integrity, and foresight to promote Lakefront Airport.

The views expressed here are solely my own.

Sincerely,
Richard Stouder
Corporate Pilot